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NOTES

AND

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS

REFERRING TO

MR. PITT

AND

WALMER CASTLE.

1801-1806.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

1866.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.



MANY of these letters were not yet in my possession when I wrote the 'Life of Pitt;' and others were put by as of merely local interest. But, as now collected, they may perhaps be welcome to some at least of those who have stood on the ramparts of Walmer Castle, and thought of its great Lord Warden in the days of the great French war.

S.

Chevening, November, 1866.

NOTES AND EXTRACTS OF LETTERS

REFERRING TO

MR. PITT AND WALMER CASTLE.

1801-1806.

Lady Hester Stanhope to Francis R. Jackson, Esq.

Burton Pynsent, April 19, 1801.

Oh, delightful, charming! this evening's post has not only brought me your letter, but a volume from Mr. P.*

He appears to be so happy and well; for he says what with the luxury of living with his friends, and the improvement of public affairs, his only apprehension will be of growing too fat for horseman's weight, at least as a companion in my rides.

Mr. Pitt to Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart.

MY DEAR SIR, Walmer Castle, Monday, Sept. 13, 1802.

I have written to you in town, but take the chance of your being returned to Ramsgate, to tell you

* Mr. Pitt. He had resigned the seals of office on the 14th of March preceding.

that I have been suffering severely from repeated sickness, and the impossibility of retaining almost any food on my stomach, and that the symptoms are such that I do not at all know how to proceed. I am therefore very anxious to see you and receive your directions as early as possible, as I do not feel that things are going at all right. Under these circumstances, you will, I am sure, forgive my troubling you, and, with your usual kindness, will give me the satisfaction of seeing you as soon as you can.

Yours very sincerely,

W. PITT.

Lady Hester Stanhope to F. R. Jackson, Esq.

Walmer Castle, Sept. 21, 1802.

Even the illness of my dear uncle has not made me quite forget the request you made me; but the first thing I must say is, that, thank God, he is quite recovered; and if he was to be ill, perhaps my having the opportunity of showing him I have talents as a nurse is better than his having had to nurse himself. I am enchanted with everything here. But I leave them all on Thursday.*

* This was Lady Hester's first appearance at Walmer Castle. She was then preparing to cross from Dover to Calais, having been invited to accompany her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Egerton, of Cheshire, in a Continental tour.

Mr. Pitt to Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart.

MY DEAR SIR,

Walmer Castle, Feb. 9, 1803.

Mr. Hulke * will have given you an account of the fresh attack which I have had of bile, from which his prescriptions have almost entirely relieved me. I know, however, that it will be a satisfaction to you to receive from myself the account of my amendment; and I think it may also be material to mention to you that some sensations of gout, which I have felt slightly at times during the last three or four days in one of my feet, are become more settled and distinct within these few hours, and that the pain and swelling (though neither of them considerable) are sufficient to require rather a larger shoe than common, and to leave me no doubt of the cause from which they proceed. I need not trouble you further at present, and I hope by the beginning of next week to be able to move to town or its neighbourhood without any inconvenience, and to have the pleasure of seeing you.

Believe me, &c.,

W. PITT.

Mr. Pitt to Lord Mahon.

DEAR MAHON,

Walmer Castle, March 10, 1803.

I am very much grieved and rather surprised (after what had passed) at the strange letter from Lord S. It certainly puts an end to all reasonable ground of hope from that quarter, and is in the manner

* Father, I believe, of the gentleman who on several occasions attended the Duke of Wellington at Walmer Castle, and was with him when he died, September 14, 1852.

of it very provoking. But as no good can arise from any answer you can return to it, I think it clearly best for you to take no notice of it, and to let the business drop in silence.

I hope my brother will be able to find the paper you want for Estcourt, and shall be very impatient to hear on what terms he thinks you can proceed.

Your account of James* gives me great pleasure, and your kindness and affection to him will, I hope, be repaid as it deserves. I am very sorry Charles is coming away from a place which he likes, and which was so well suited to him. The sum you propose to allot to each, will, I hope, be quite adequate, and is one which is very liberal and generous in you to spare.

I shall be most happy to see you here again the first moment you have to spare, without interruption to your business with Estcourt, and when you have shaken off the remains of your very troublesome complaint. I do not like at all the account of your being so much reduced in strength. If you are not already better, pray consult Farquhar immediately.

Affectionately yours,

W. P.

*Lady Hester Stanhope to F. R. Jackson, Esq., His
Majesty's Minister at Berlin.*

Walmer Castle, Oct. 1803.

You can easily figure to yourself that I have not much time to spare from the charming society I

* The Hon. Charles and James Stanhope were the younger brothers of Lord Mahon.

now live in. To express the kindness with which Mr. Pitt welcomed my return,* and proposed my living with him, would be impossible. One would really suppose that all obligation had been on his side! Here then am I, happy to a degree, exactly in the sort of society I most like. There are generally three or four men staying in the house; we dine nine or ten almost every other day.

Mr. Pitt absolutely goes through the fatigue of a drill-sergeant. It is parade after parade, at fifteen or twenty miles distant from each other. I often attend him; and it is quite as much, I can assure you, as I am equal to, although I am remarkably well just now. The hard riding I do not mind, but to remain almost still so many hours on horseback is an incomparable *bore*, and requires more patience than you can easily imagine. However, I suppose few regiments for the time were ever so forward; therefore the trouble is nothing; and if Mr. Pitt does not overdo it and injure his health, every other consideration becomes trifling. You know me too well not to be aware of the anxiety I am under upon this account; and the extreme care I take, or rather endeavour to take, of this blessing (so essential to him in his present active line of conduct, and therefore invaluable to his country), is kindly rewarded by

* From the Continent, with Mr. and Mrs. Egerton, in the previous August. Lady Hester was then wholly without a home, owing to the continued unkindness of her father, and to the death (in April, 1803) of her grandmother, Lady Chatham, with whom, since early in 1800, she had for the most part resided at Burton Pynsent.

his minding me more than any other person, and allowing me to speak to him upon the subject of his health, which is always an unpleasant one, and one he particularly dislikes. There is no use in flattering a man who is not ill from fancy and makes but too light of his complaints. Therefore I pursue quite a different plan; and I am happy to be able to tell you sincerely I see nothing at all alarming about him: he had a cough when I first came to England, but it has nearly or quite left him; he is thin, yet certainly strong, and his spirits are excellent.

Mr. P. is determined to remain acting Colonel when his regiment is called into the field. Some persons blame this determination, but I do not; he has always hitherto acted up to his character: why should he, then, in this instance prove deficient? I should not be the least surprised any night to hear of the French attempting to land; indeed, I expect it; but I feel equally certain that those who do succeed in this will neither proceed nor return.*

Mr. Pitt to Lord Mahon.

DEAR MAHON,

Margate, Oct. 24, 1803.

In our way here Lord Carrington and I have been comparing Lord Stanhope's answer with the pre-

* Such was the feeling at that time of the entire people, even down to the writers of libels and lampoons. Thus writes or sings Peter Pindar:—

“Come the Consul whenever he will,
And he means it when Neptune is calmer,
Pitt will send him a d—— bitter pill
From his fortress the castle of Walmer.”

ceding proposals; and Lord Carrington has just written to Harrison to desire him to make the inquiry, which strikes us as essential under the 24th Article. You will probably call on Harrison on the subject. Adieu! Captain Cobb and his brave troops are impatiently waiting for us on the field of battle.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. P.

Lord Carrington to Lord Mahon.

Deal Castle, Nov. 18, 1803.

Pitt being obliged to go to Dover to-morrow afternoon, I have agreed with him that the marriage* shall take place at four o'clock to-morrow instead of five; but, as he may not be very punctual, I suppose half-past four will be the time. I have seen Backhouse† and settled with him this alteration.

Mr. Pitt to Lord Mahon.

DEAR MAHON,

Walmer Castle, Nov. 22, 1803.

Hester had already written to James desiring him to come to us as soon as he can obtain leave, which I hope will be immediately. It will certainly be most desirable to have an opportunity of talking over with him fully his future plans, and if his aversion to the Navy has taken a deep root it cannot be wished that he should remain in it; otherwise I should much regret his

* Of Lord Mahon to the Hon. Catherine Lucy Smith, fourth daughter of Lord Carrington.

† Rev. J. H. Backhouse, rector of the parish. The ceremony was to take place, by special licence, in the dining-room of Deal Castle.

quitting a line in which he has already passed so much time and had so fair a prospect of succeeding. I will forward your letter to him by to-day's post, though probably he may have left Portsmouth before it gets there.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. PITT.

Lady Hester Stanhope to F. R. Jackson, Esq., at Berlin.

Walmer Castle, Jan. 14, 1804.

We are in almost daily expectation of the arrival of the French, and Mr. Pitt's regiment is now nearly perfect enough to receive them. We have the famous 15th Light Dragoons in our Barracks; also the Northampton and Berkshire Militia. The first and last of these regiments I command, and have an orderly dragoon whenever I please from the former and the band of the latter. I never saw any Militia regiment so well officered, or composed of such pleasant men, as the Berkshire. A Northamptonshire squire is not pleasant in his own country, and does not improve with transplanting, but the regiment is a fine body of men. I am at this moment alone here with my little brother James, who has left the Navy for the Army; he is too clever for a sailor, too refined, I mean. I do not regret the change, as higher powers approve it. He is now in the Guards, and is to join I believe soon: the time will be decided when Mr. Pitt returns. I expect him in a few days. He was perfectly well when he left me; his most intimate friends say they do not remember him as well since the year Ninety-Seven. Nothing can please me better than the pleasant footing I am upon with all those most attached

to him, and the satisfaction it appears to give him when they show me civility Oh, such miserable things as the French gun-boats! We took a vessel the other day loaded with gin—to keep up their spirits I suppose: another with abominable bread and a vast quantity of peas and beans, which the soldiers eat. One of the boats had an extreme large chest of medicine, probably for half their flotilla. Their guns are ill-mounted, and cannot be used with the same advantage as ours, but are fine pieces of ordnance. Buonaparte was said to be at Boulogne a few days ago; our officers patrolled all night with the men, which was pleasant. I have my orders how to act in case of real alarm in Mr. P.'s absence, and also a promise from him never to be further from the army than a two hours' ride. This is all I wish: I should break my heart to be drove up the country like a sheep when everything I most love was in danger.

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Mr. Pitt to Lord Mahon.

DEAR MAHON,

Walmer Castle, Jan. 31, 1804.

The sooner you comply with the summons you have received, the better, and I hope your presence will have the effect of bringing the business at last to a conclusion. We will take as good care of the coast as we can in your absence; but as our garrison here is rather stronger than you will leave at Maxton, I hope you will advise Lady Mahon to take up her quarters here till you return.

Affectionately yours,

W. PITT.

Lady Hester Stanhope to Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart.

Walmer Castle, April 15, 1804.

I hope soon to have the pleasure of seeing you, but in the mean time must just state to you what I think about Mr. Pitt's health, not omitting to say how very uneasy his constant cough has lately made me, which till within these last six days he would take no care of, exposing himself to these easterly winds late in the evening, attending his duty not as a soldier and Colonel of a regiment, but more like a drill-sergeant.

I have also to beg that you will most forcibly dwell upon all directions you think necessary to give him. Nobody is so like an angel when he is extremely ill, and few persons less tractable when a little ill; always urging it is nothing, and taking no care in the world of himself.*

Memorandum by Mr. Pitt.

(Downing Street) Dec. 26, 1804.

The messenger is to search with Burfield † in the Library at Walmer for a large green bag, containing some heavy books. It is to be sealed up (if not sealed

* Mr. Pitt resumed the seals of office as Prime Minister in less than a month from the date of this letter—on the 10th of May, 1804.

† Burfield was the gardener at Walmer Castle. He died at Deal so lately as 1859, at the age of 89, and his widow survived him till 1863. This memorandum, in Mr. Pitt's own writing, had remained in her possession.

already) and brought immediately to town. The bag will be found either in the corner of the shelves, or in the closet made by one of the windows in the Library.

If necessary, the closet must be broke open.

W. P.

Lady Hester Stanhope to Mr. Pitt.

Walmer Castle, January 24 (1805).

Burfield went to Maidstone yesterday for the last lot of trees and shrubs, which he expects will be all planted in ten days, unless a frost prevents it. I had a conversation with him about what was likely to grow in the chalk-pit. I proposed a few evergreen oaks, which he says will answer there, but nowhere else about the place. We both agreed upon filling it with a variety of creepers, furze, broom, or about anything that will grow and make it look less barren.

*Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.**

Walmer Castle, Feb. 3, 1805.

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 Last spring and part of the summer I bore in the great world much more than my value for talents, looks, &c. Everything was over-rated, and although I was perfectly aware of it at the time, then I own I enjoyed it. Now if I could command it, it would be indifferent

* Selected as Private Secretary by Mr. Pitt on his return to office. This most amiable and accomplished gentleman survived till June, 1862.

to me ; but my looks are gone, as they always do in the absence of health ; and I have been recommended to come into the country to regain them ; and here I have been three weeks. . . . I am not dull, or rather not idle, as I have the charge of improvements here, plantations, farms, buildings, &c. The grave and the gay Generals pay me all due respect and attention, and so would all the garrison* if I would allow them ; but as I did not come here to be gay, I dispense with their civility and society.

When I left Mr. P. he was very well, and bearing all the fatigues of business most astonishingly. Poor dear Lord H.'s† illness fell very heavy upon him for a time. I hope you like *Lord Ha Ha Ha* as well as he is to be liked.

Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.

Sunday (Walmer Castle, April, 1805).

I am pretty well, but I am not allowed to go out yet, which vexes me, as I wish to attend to a plantation Mr. P. knows nothing of. Lord Guilford has left his place in this part of the world,‡ and is cutting down trees, and making all the money he can of it. He has allowed me to take a great many shrubs (these he gives to me), and, as anything green in this part of the world is a treasure, I have been employing myself to cultivate a frightful barren bit of ground behind the Castle, as it

* In Deal Barracks.

† Lord Harrowby, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

‡ Waldershare Park.

may be years and years before such an offer of plants might again be made; and buy them you cannot, of a considerable size at least; and little twigs make no show; and should Mr. Pitt come the end of the week, I should like the plantation to be finished.

Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.

Thursday (Walmer Castle, April, 1805).

Pray be quite easy about me, for I assure you I am a vast deal better. . . . This nasty fever is vastly provoking, for had Mr. P. come here I would have returned with him, and at all events I meant to come up the end of next week, to go to the Installation.*

I am so hurt about Lord M.† and all that has passed. What a charming speech Mr. P. made! I think I see him; and certainly *cet heureux et vaste regard, qui saisit à la fois toutes les faces et tous les rapports, embrasse tous les objets sans les confondre, et les tient tous à l'imagination*, ought to have awed some rascals during the debate on Monday. Oh that I had been Lord M., that I might have gone upon my knees to Mr. P. not to have defended me!

There was no end yesterday to the farmers and people who wanted to get a sight of the papers. Their joy about Lord M. is whimsical enough; they say it proves that "bad is the best of them;" and it will make Mr. P.

* Of the Knights of the Garter, held at Windsor Castle, April 23, 1805.

† Melville.

“shine;” that he is the only honest man amongst them, and the only public man with clean hands. “Our master, our Colonel here,” as they call him.

Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.

Sunday (Walmer Castle, 1805).

I was frightened to a degree when the messenger arrived. I thought at first Mr. P. was ill, and when I saw his handwriting, that he was out of office; but was delighted to find it was only papers he wanted. I hope he found what he wanted, but they are in great confusion. I wish you would ask him some day if he would like me to bring any more to town when I come, for at this moment perhaps it is difficult to say what are those he may want.

Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.

Wednesday (Walmer Castle, 1805.)

Some persons write me Mr. P. looks well, others that he does not; I feel a constant anxiety about his health, and fear that business without end must be too much for him or any one else. It often, indeed, occurs to me that you are likely to suffer from so much confinement. Let me give you one piece of advice, which is, to attend to your meals as regularly as possible, even if you sit up or rise the earlier for it to get through business. I have often been told that half Mr. P.'s complaints were originally brought on by fasting too

long, and indeed only eating when he found it convenient, which ruined the tone of his stomach.

Lady Hester Stanhope to W. D. Adams, Esq.

Hotel, Bognor, Sunday night
(last months of 1806 ?).

I feel I am like dear Mr. Pitt when I am in the country, for I recollect hearing him say he never saw a house, or cottage, or garden, he liked, but he immediately struck out improvements in his own mind.

